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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Philadelphia Youth Aid Panel (YAP), an alternative approach to juvenile justice. YAPs, also known as Community Accountability Panels, evolved from 1950s legislation empowering panels of community members to handle low-level juvenile offenders. The Youth Aid Panel allows low-level juvenile offenders who have admitted their guilt to avoid facing the criminal justice system. YAP operates through the District Attorney's Office and is open to youthful first-time, nonviolent offenders. Juveniles and their parents go before a panel of community members, and sentences are passed that includes: restitution, serious self-reflection, and community service. Youths are assigned to monitors who maintain contact throughout the process. Section 1 describes YAP and its operations, based on information from interviews and focus groups with youths, panelists, parents, police officers, probation officers, and YAP staff. Section 2 analyzes data on 300 1994 YAP youth tracked through the juvenile and adult court record systems. Another 300 similar youth, arrested for low-level crimes in 1994 but not part of YAP, were also tracked. This provided a context for examining YAP recidivism rates. Overall, most YAP participants were male, black youth age 14-17 years who committed weapons violations. Over 70 percent of participants completed the program. Within 3 years, 29.9 percent of YAP completers were rearrested, compared with 44.4 percent of non-YAP youth. Section 3 discusses promising aspects of YAP, offering recommendations on strengthening operations and future research. (SM)

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A community-based diversion program for first-time youthful offenders.

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Foreword

Each year, over 8,000 juveniles are arrested in Philadelphia. Most of these youth—both in Philadelphia and throughout the country—are nonviolent, first-time offenders. In most cases, the severest sanction imposed is some form of probation. However, more and more experts in the juvenile justice field agree that this approach does not serve these youthful offenders well. First, there is significant evidence that the formal justice system does not and cannot deal seriously with them. Because of cost considerations, they get little or no real supervision on probation, which results in the worst of all possible outcomes for the youth and for society—young offenders who believe that crime has no real consequences. Second, while these youth may not receive much attention during probation, they do have an official interaction with the court system and thus end up with a "record," which is a serious stigma, especially for youth who have committed only minor offenses.

Therefore, juvenile justice systems in communities across the country are exploring alternative approaches to dealing with youthful first-time, nonviolent offenders. Youth Aid Panels (YAPs), also known as Community Accountability Panels (CAPs), conferencing boards or neighborhood conferencing committees, represent an effort to divert youthful offenders from the formal justice system, and they are growing in popularity in communities across the country. Many of these programs provide nonviolent, first-time offenders who admit their guilt with the opportunity to avoid interaction with the formal justice system by facing a group of volunteer community members, their victim, their parent(s) or guardian and a law enforcement official. The group determines a sentence that typically requires three things of the youth: some form of victim restitution, serious reflection on his or her crime, and community service. These programs are also being used as a component of the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's balance and restorative justice approach, a justice philosophy that attempts to balance the needs of the offender, the victim and the community.

Youth Aid Panels and programs like them have the potential to address several pressing problems facing juvenile courts today. By meeting the processing, sentencing and monitoring needs of low-level offenders, YAPs reduce the burden on juvenile courts, leaving them better able to deal with the offenses of violent and serious juvenile offenders, and sparing them considerable expense. Through the panel process, low-level offenders arguably experience a more significant response to their crime than courts can currently offer, thereby helping them to understand that their negative behavior has consequences. In addition, victims have more opportunity to participate in dealing with the offense against them, and low-level juvenile offenders avoid the stigma and potential limitations associated with a delinquent record.

P/PV's interest in these alternative approaches to juvenile justice and this study of the YAP program in Philadelphia was prompted by our work on two issues central to our overall agenda: the effect of positive adult-youth relationships on the lives of young people, an issue in which we have invested a decade of research; and community-based strategies for reaching and supporting very high-risk youth. Our research indicates that well-structured, constructive relationships with caring nonrelated adults can have a positive effect on the behavior, school performance and family relationships of at-risk youth. And in 12 communities across the country, we are currently studying the effectiveness of partnerships between faith-based institutions and local law enforcement in working with youth who have been in trouble with the law.

Philadelphia's YAP provides an important context within which to continue investigating these issues. The program is operated out of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and is an alternative sanction for first-time, low-level juvenile offenders. YAP provides an opportunity for eligible youth to choose to face a panel of volunteers from the community instead of a juvenile judge, thus allowing them to keep their records clean. It has several programmatic elements that our work in other areas indicates are useful for working with high-risk youth, including the involvement of community adults; priority attention from local law enforcement, in this case the District Attorney's Office; partnerships between law enforcement and community institutions; and the provision of support to youth while they are held responsible for their behavior.

This report offers a close examination of the Philadelphia Youth Aid Panel. In Section 1, we describe the YAP program and how it operates, based on information collected through interviews and focus groups with youth, panelists, parents, police officers, probation officers and YAP staff. In Section 2, we present and analyze data on 300 youth who participated in YAP in 1994 and who were tracked through the juvenile and adult court record systems; 300 similar youth who were arrested for low-level crimes in 1994 but who did not participate in YAP were also tracked. This comparison group does not allow for definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of the YAP program, but it does provide a context for examining the recidivism rates of YAP participants. In Section 3, we discuss the promising aspects of the YAP program and make recommendations about how operations can be strengthened and what further research on YAP is needed. It is our hope that the information contained in this report will be useful to the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and its community partners as well as to other communities seeking alternative strategies for working with young, low-level offenders. Any organization interested in learning more about Philadelphia's YAP program may contact:

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History

The YAP program evolved from legislation enacted in New Jersey in the 1950s that empowered panels of community members to deal with low-level juvenile offenders. Delaware County was the first in Pennsylvania to begin a modified version of New Jersey's "juvenile court conference committees," followed by the Bucks County juvenile court, which further modified and fully implemented the YAP program. The Bucks County model, later adopted by Delaware County, made its way to Philadelphia via justice innovators in the city's District Attorney's Office.

With over a decade of experience as a juvenile probation officer, Michael Cleary, an Assistant District Attorney (ADA), was convinced of the need for a program like YAP:

> *"I knew," he recalls, "that I was spending all my time with the most serious youth offenders and was not able to hold the other kids accountable. This failure to monitor is a factor in their future crime and delinquency."*

Since it was impossible to hire the legions of probation officers needed to supervise the low-level offenders, the YAP model represented an exciting alternative. Instead of going to court, first-time offenders could face a panel of community volunteers who, after reviewing the case and questioning the youth, would devise a "contract" intended to teach the youth a lesson and introduce him or her to a positive activity or association. In addition, according to Cleary, YAP is a much less expensive alternative to court:

> *The court cost and the cost to the probation system for dealing with these kids is exorbitant. With the panels, the only costs are for me, our law clerk and six to eight hours a month from the police officers involved.*

The first panel was established in May 1987, and every four months after that the District Attorney's Office trained a fresh group of volunteers. By the early 1990s, every police district in Philadelphia had a fully operating YAP. By mid 2000, there were 27 panels operating in the city.

The YAP Process

Selection of Youth

Today, YAP still operates out of the District Attorney's Office directly from the desk of Michael Cleary. He receives each morning's list of juvenile arrests and decides which of the young offenders will be considered eligible for YAP.

Originally the program accepted only those accused of a misdemeanor for the first time. But over the years the ADA has extended the YAP offer to an increasing number of youth accused of felony offenses in cases where no weapon was involved and no injury was sustained by the victim. The program has been expanded beyond misdemeanor offenses in an effort to give higher-risk youth an opportunity to take advantage of the program. Offers are occasionally extended to youth accused of second offenses, particularly if both charges were minor and the first charge was withdrawn or dismissed in court.

Still, YAP was never designed to deal with hardcore criminals. Therefore, cases that reflect harsher crimes—although they may officially be eligible—are weeded out. For example, youth charged with selling drugs, using guns or other lethal weapons, or causing serious bodily harm are rejected. The same goes for chronic truants. If a review of school records (a printout sent to the ADA's office by the Philadelphia School District) indicates that a youth is not enrolled in school, he or she is immediately crossed off the list. According to Cleary:

> *YAP is designed for youth that the District Attorney's Office feels can be turned around by volunteers in their own neighborhood.*

Finally, Cleary passes the significantly pared-down list to the District Attorney's law clerk, who begins another filtering process. The list is reviewed again to reconfirm that the youth have no prior arrests by using the police photo numbers to search the juvenile records system. Youth's names are also looked up in the YAP database to make sure they have not already been through the program. (Because youth who complete YAP have their record cleared, it is possible that a juvenile could reappear on the eligibility list falsely as a first-time offender.) If a youth clears both checks, the clerk looks at his or her address and selects a district and a date for the hearing. The new list of eligible candidates is delivered to the police liaison officer responsible for interviewing YAP candidates and offering them the opportunity to participate in the program. This officer operates out of the Philadelphia Youth Study Center, the detention center for delinquent youth. The officer interviews the youth the next business day after the arrest. Those youth who were cut from the YAP list because of their delinquent or school records or as a result of the law clerk's searches are referred to court.

Several other people contribute to the selection of the YAP candidates as well, either by making recommendations or through rejections. Occasionally the school district has information about an offense that occurred on school property that was not available to the District Attorney's Office when the arrest was reviewed. In those cases the Assistant General Counsel for the Philadelphia School District can recommend that a youth not be offered YAP. The police liaison officer at the Youth Study Center not only helps identify young people who should not be in the program but also calls the District Attorney's Office when he comes across a youth who was not considered a candidate for YAP and perhaps should be, though the officer with whom we spoke said that Cleary "rarely misses one." At the panel hearing, the panelists also have the authority to dismiss youth from the program, and each panel has developed its individual tolerance level. Cleary says that they try to select panelists who can see through the negative attitudes sometimes presented by the juveniles; however, youth are at times referred to court for tardiness and disrespectful behavior. Of course, the youth themselves also play a role in the selection process, both when they decide to enter the program and if they choose to leave it after experiencing the hearing or learning the details of their contract.

While Cleary might not be the only one editing the YAP roster, every aspect of the program bears his stamp. His early morning designations essentially determine the makeup of the youth group that will participate in YAP, and any subsequent rejection or inclusion decisions are made by people trained by him. He is also an exceptionally involved manager: he visits the panels, conducts the panelist training, visits many youth before their hearing to encourage them to attend, and is available to the panelists to answer questions. The panelists, police officers and other professionals who work with the program frequently mentioned his name in their discussion of YAP, and quite a few referred to rules or advice he had provided. Cleary's personal involvement in YAP reflects the importance of the program in the District Attorney's Office, something Cleary believes is critical to the success of these types of programs.

The Intake Procedure

Intake is a very important part of the YAP process since it provides yet another opportunity to make sure that the youth who are selected as eligible for YAP on paper are actually a good fit for the program. The police liaison officer gives careful attention to each case that comes before him, though he recites (almost word for word) the same pitch in every interview. He verbally verifies that this is a first arrest and then reads the charge sheet aloud. Putting down the paper, he looks directly at the young person and asks, "Is this true?" This allows the youth a brief opportunity to give his or her version of the event and allows the intake officer to determine if the youth considers him or herself guilty of the crime. If the juvenile does not believe or refuses to admit that he or she is guilty, the officer ends the interview immediately and refers the case to court. YAP's intention is to provide a community response to an admitted crime, not a community trial for a suspected one, and discussions of guilt or innocence are not part of the panel proceedings.

If the youth admits guilt, the police liaison officer turns his attention to the adult who has accompanied the youth, often the mother, and asks about the young person's behavior at home and in school. If the youth sounds disruptive and the adult seems to be at his or her wit's end, the officer may decide to send the case to court.

YAP only considers cases in which the youth shows some evidence of support from a responsible adult. If the youth arrives without a responsible adult, but has a sufficient reason (such as the illness of a parent or guardian), the case can be continued for the appearance of an adult. If the youth does not have a sufficient reason and no responsible adult appears to be available, the case is likely to be referred to court. Cleary points out that the adult who shows up with the youth only has to meet one requirement: genuine interest in and support of the youth that the panel can build on.

The police liaison officer may also refer the case to court if he feels that the youth has a bad attitude or does not appear to feel remorseful. Again, according to Cleary, YAP is intended for youth that "the community can handle."

Still looking directly at the parent, the officer begins his usual speech: "I represent the District Attorney's Office, and you have the option to enter a program called Youth Aid Panel. If your child does everything he or she is supposed to do in this program, the record will be wiped clean. There are Youth Aid Panels all over the city. They are made up of ordinary citizens who meet in police stations and hospitals on weeknights at 7:00 p.m." Turning toward the youth, he continues: "They will ask you what you did, why you did it, and then they will show you a better way to lead your life. They will ask your mother about your behavior, your grades and any positive activities you may be involved with. It is then their duty to come up with a punishment for you to do. They may ask you to write a 1,000-word essay or, if there is an older gentleman in your neighborhood, they may have you run errands or do chores for him, one day, maybe an additional day, maybe an *additional* day. If you do what you are supposed to do, then the whole situation will be over and you won't have a criminal record. So, what do you want to do? Go into the program or go to court?"

Choosing YAP

Almost all youth who are offered the opportunity choose to go to YAP. The police liaison officer estimates that in only about "1 out of 100 cases" is the YAP offer refused. This usually happens when the adult is having so much trouble with the child that he or she wants the youth to be placed in an institution for delinquents. Generally, it is not that parents want to see their children receive a severe punishment, but they may want their child to have more supervision than they or even YAP can provide. In a few instances, despite the fact that the youth admits guilt, the parents or adult insists that the child is innocent and wants the case taken to court where it can be tried. These cases are simply referred to court.

If a youth agrees to participate in the YAP program, the police liaison officer calls the law clerk for the hearing date and district that had been reserved for the youth earlier. Youth are usually assigned to hearings in their own police districts, but busy districts rotate with each other, so youth are often sent to neighboring districts.

Both the youth and parents that we spoke with in focus groups chose YAP primarily because of the opportunity to clear their record. Even the younger youth were clear about the consequences of a delinquent record, whether for part-time jobs or athletic scholarships. Young people were also afraid to go to court and risk being "locked up" in a correctional facility. One young man recalled:

> *Back when I was in elementary school we had a judge that used to come to school every year and he used to tell us if he ever seen us in his court or whatever, he said he not going to play with us, he just gonna say, "Bring your toothbrush and a fresh pair of drawers!"...A lot of people that I know now, they've been telling me that they just been getting that judge and they said he just been sending them away and stuff. I ain't seen people in months!*

YAP and the Police

In addition to the police liaison officer, two other types of police officers are involved in YAP—the officer who arrested the young offender and the Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) who actually serves on the panel in their district. Up until January 1999, the arresting officer had a somewhat limited role. After making an arrest, he or she could recommend the youth for YAP by writing "candidate for YAP" on the complaint fact sheet after first checking with the ADA on duty that the youth had no previous arrests. However, several CPOs pointed out that most of the arresting officers in their districts did not know about the program and were thus unlikely to take it into account when arresting young people for minor crimes. As a result the District Attorney's Office has taken steps to involve the arresting officer more in the YAP process. Now an arresting officer receives a letter from the program about the youth's participation in YAP, and the officer is also invited to attend the hearing, provide additional information about the charge and contribute ideas for the contract. Conversely, CPOs have always had a very significant role in the YAP process. Their responsibilities generally include more prevention and victim assistance than those of a regular officer, and their panel assignment is typically among their regular duties. Most of the CPOs we spoke with had expressed interest in the panel position to their supervisor, though a few were assigned without being consulted. One CPO rolled her eyes when asked if she had volunteered to serve on the panel and explained dryly that it came with her position, but another CPO said she loved the work and plans to serve on a panel when she retires.

The CPOs on the panels play a significant role both in setting the tone and in administrating the hearings. The CPOs are responsible for liaison with the District Attorney's Office; they receive the charge sheets from the law clerk for each new youth and keep track of the contract paperwork for the panel. CPOs also set up the room each night the panel meets; they are the first to greet the youth and parents and can help explain the charges to the panel. They are also helpful in that, as uniformed officers, they lend an air of formality and seriousness to the hearings and have the authority to subdue agitated victims or defendants. As one CPO described:

> *I just kind of set the mood, letting them know that even though we're not at [Family Court] and there's not a judge there with a robe on, you're still in the police district. I'm the liaison between them, and I'm gonna have law and order. I mean, I don't walk around like Wyatt Earp with a big brim hat and a stogie in my mouth, but we start right from the beginning letting them know that this is a serious matter.*

Officially, all CPOs serve the same function, but officers on different panels have varying definitions of their role. One CPO we spoke with serves as a full panelist, fulfills monitoring responsibilities, and admits that her recommendations tend to carry more weight in the hearing process because she is an officer. Another CPO does not act as a monitor or even as a panelist: "My job is really just to work with the secretary and our chairperson." The CPOs were typically described as indispensable by the panelists: "[Our CPO] kept us up-to-date...He'd kind of like make our job easier, and then just his presence there made a difference, a lot of difference."

The Panelists

Selection

The ADA has found that the most reliable method of advertising for panelist volunteers is word of mouth, but newspaper and radio advertisements are also placed. This combination of recruitment tactics seems to draw a racially and occupationally diverse group of candidates; in the words of a panelist trainer from Good Shepherd, a neighborhood mediation house, applicants include everyone from "priests to cab drivers." Gender diversity has been a problem. To date, panelists have tended to be women and the District Attorney's Office is working on ways to attract more men, particularly men of color, to the program.

The initial screening includes an exhaustive criminal records and references check, and confirms that the applicant is at least 18 years old and a resident of Philadelphia. Two months before the training is scheduled to start, the applicants who have come through the first screening are contacted by phone and, if still interested in participating, are scheduled for an interview. The interview is conducted by a three-person team made up of an ADA, a probation officer and a CPO. The interviews were described by the panelists as somewhat perfunctory, designed only to weed out those conspicuously lacking in common sense or a sincere desire to be involved in the program, or those who are overly committed and too busy to participate. Once panelists complete training, the time commitment includes two nights per month, two to three hours each for hearings and about two to three hours per month for monitoring YAP participants. The interview results are screened by the ADA and the Deputy DA, who then send all approved candidates' names to the Department of Public Welfare for a check of child abuse records.

The panelists we spoke with volunteered for a range of reasons: in memory of a slain son, as a continuation of other work with troubled young people, because of a son's experience with a program similar to YAP, or because of a desire to work directly with youth. One constant was the belief, in the words of one panelist, that "young people make mistakes and kids deserve a second chance." As another panelist explained:

> *Everybody deserves a chance, even if you did the crime...In our society sometimes a good child could get with the wrong element and because of peer pressure do something just because they wanna be part of the group.*

Training

Both new CPOs and panelists attend initial training consisting of five two-hour sessions. These sessions are meant to be convenient for the panelists, who can elect to attend a session in the Family Court Building in Center City, Philadelphia, or in a police station in their neighborhood.

The sessions are designed to give new panelists a thorough briefing on panel operations. The District Attorney's law clerk, the ADA and the Deputy District Attorney introduce the YAP concept, provide an overview of the juvenile justice system, explain the screening process used for juvenile referrals and the paperwork generated at a hearing, and show a video of a simulated YAP hearing. A current panel chair gives his or her perspective on panel practices, and a police officer is on hand to explain the juvenile arrest procedure. Panelists participate in interactive exercises in which they play the roles of youthful offenders, victims and parents. They also learn to write and develop outside resources for the youth contracts.

Since 1997, the training has included a session on working with crime victims and incorporating them into the YAP process. Trainers from Good Shepherd help the volunteers develop skills in mediation, interviewing, listening and communicating, consensus building and decision-making, and effective delegation and management. The training is an additional opportunity for the District Attorney's Office to weed out less appropriate panelists; no-shows and unsuitable candidates are not invited back for the graduation ceremony. Panelists gave the initial training mixed reviews. Many agreed with the panelist who said:

> *It's just like going to college and everything is by the book, and when you get out it's altogether different. I don't think the training is really relevant to what we do.*

New panelists are assigned to the panel in their home district, unless another district is understaffed and needs volunteers. Each panel has a chair responsible for running the hearing and a secretary who records the contract and helps the CPO keep track of all active cases. When a chair or secretary leaves a panel, a new officer is selected through what Cleary describes as "a long and involved process." Outgoing officers make recommendations, and input is provided by the ADA, the law clerk and the Good Shepherd trainers. New panelists are contacted approximately six months after they begin serving to check on their progress and are approached with a request for membership renewal after a year. Every two or three years, the District Attorney's Office holds an awards ceremony to recognize outstanding panelists.

Good Shepherd also runs annual advanced and executive training sessions for continuing panelists and executive panelists (chairs and secretaries), respectively. The training includes ethics games, role playing (where controversial situations in panel hearings are raised and discussed) and work on bias perception. According to the trainer, "the biggest issue in advanced training is negotiating the shift from individuals' world views to group consensus." This training seems to be popular, because panelists with some experience can participate more fully. It is also an opportunity for panelists and CPOs to share their experiences with other districts. One CPO explained that she enjoyed the advanced training because "I like to listen to stories of other CPOs, how they're running their panel, if they're having the same problems that I am...You talk about different ways of handling different situations, and you share ideas."

Panel Supervision

The progress of the panels is personally supervised by the ADA and a law clerk. The two split the 27 panels between them, and each panel is visited quarterly. During the visits, these two review caseloads, answer questions and observe panels in action. The law clerk explained that when she visits a panel she reviews "procedural things" with the panelists and, while observing a hearing, evaluates the appropriateness of the panelists' questions, the way the panelists talk to the youth, the amount of time they spend on each case, and the contract terms. All of the panelists and CPOs we spoke with described both the ADA, and particularly the law clerk, as accessible and helpful.

When the program was first established, there was a Youth Aid Advisory Council that met to review the program's progress, to review the roster of the latest graduating classes of panel members and current panel contracts, and to approve or disapprove disciplinary actions for panelists. (Panelists are asked to leave as a result of chronic absences, violated confidentiality or inappropriate demeanor during panel sessions.) Cleary said the council was instrumental when the program was just beginning, but it was disbanded in 1993 because the program was working well and running smoothly. He now contacts old members informally if he has any concerns.

The Victims

Victims are officially a part of the YAP process, but their actual involvement has been minimal. Prior to January 1999, victims received a notification letter from the District Attorney's Office that explained the YAP process, asked them to send in requests for restitution and invited them to attend the hearing. The law clerk who sent the letters said that before 1999, although most sent in a request for restitution, only about one-sixth attended the hearing. It is interesting to note that no mention was made of victims in either the youth or panelist focus groups.

Convinced of the importance of victim involvement, the District Attorney's Office has recently focused on increasing victim participation. According to the law clerk responsible for the new victim component of the YAP program:

> *We had to be more aggressive about involving victims because they didn't know they could be involved. They didn't know their rights and responsibilities.*

Beginning in 1999, attached to the victim notification letter is an impact statement that asks what the victim would like to see happen and if the victim has any suggestions for community service work for the offender; it also requests a description of the "physical, emotional, and/or financial impact" of the crime. The law clerk contacts the victim by

phone if there is no response after one week. Even those who choose not to attend the hearing receive a letter informing them that the offender has entered into a contract with the panel, and victims can call the District Attorney's Office to learn the specifics of the contract. The law clerk estimates that three-quarters of the victims return the impact statement and approximately half of the victims now choose to attend the hearing. The clerk also said that panels have begun to include more demands for restitution in contracts and that the juveniles are paying up. Further, for the past four years, initial and ongoing panelist training has included victim awareness.

The Hearing

Panels meet twice a month, and each session is usually two hours long, allowing one hour for each of two hearings. In our sample of 300 youth, the hearing typically occurred two months after the intake interview, although Cleary said that since the study the creation of additional panels in busy districts has reduced that interval to one month. Most of the youth in the sample (84.3%) showed up for the hearing, and those who failed to appear without a good excuse were automatically referred to court.

Before the first hearing begins, panelists have administrative time to review the police paperwork on the case they are about to hear and to discuss other cases that are currently being monitored. When they are ready for the first case, the CPO brings the youth and parent(s) into the room and seats them at a long table facing the panelists. One CPO said that in preparing youth for the hearing he usually explains to them up front:

> *When you come in here, you can't be getting smart, you can't chew any gum, you can't be slouching or anything like that. You gotta show respect. If they do come in here with an attitude, we check 'em at the front door.*

The hearing usually begins with the secretary taking down the youth's biographical information, followed by a reading of the charges by the CPO or the panel chair. The youth is then asked to describe the crime and explain why he or she was arrested. If the crime victim is present, he or she is also invited to speak. The panelists then begin questioning the youth in a manner described in the ADA's *Organizational Manual* as "informal and dignified." This often translates into a confrontational style designed to make the youth aware "of the consequences involved, that what they did was wrong." As one panelist said, "Sometimes I tell them, I say, you screwed up. You have to be pretty honest with them because they did screw up."

Most volunteers seemed to agree with the panelist who argued that, "A little fear never hurt anybody. So, I put the fear of God in them."

The Contract

Besides trying to engender a sense of remorse and responsibility to the community, the panelists ask questions relevant to developing a suitable contract for the youth. They ask about the youth's interests, positive and negative activities, needs and future plans. Panelists routinely say they want to help the youth find something they are interested in and have them reflect on what they did rather than just punish them. After the panelists feel the youth has recognized his or her error and after they have enough information to formulate the contract, the young person is asked to leave the room. Panelists then speak with the parent; sometimes parents are unwilling to disclose their fears in front of their child and often need a chance to be heard and supported. As one parent said:

> *When I got there, it was kind of embarrassing, you know; you feel embarrassed 'cause you're the parent and you're thinking, God, what did I do wrong, why is my kid acting like this?*

One long-time panelist explained that:

> *A lot of parents feel they need the intervention of somebody else to back up what it is they would like their children to do and how they want them to change course.*

After the parent has a chance to speak, the panel meets privately to design a contract: 80.9 percent of the sample who attended their hearing were awarded a contract; 19.1 percent were re-listed to court—most because they were not accompanied by parents, but a few because they had negative attitudes or claimed innocence. Panelists try to construct contracts that address the interests of the youth in an innovative manner—requests for songs or artwork appeared more than once—but certain assignments remain popular across panels. Almost all youth in the sample (83.5%) were instructed to write at least one essay, typically either a reflective piece or a book report. Roughly half (48.1%) were assigned community service, and 50.2 percent were instructed to attend a class at the Philadelphia Service Institute (PSI). PSI holds Saturday classes on subjects like retail theft and disorderly conduct. Youth pay $25 to attend the four-hour class, which covers the laws surrounding the crime and the possible consequences. In 1995, the panels began sending youth to the Good Shepherd Conflict Resolution Program because of its exclusive focus on youth, and they now rarely use PSI. A little over one-fourth of the sample (28.6%) had to provide a verbal or written apology to the victim; 28.1 percent had to improve their attendance or grades at school; 14 percent had to make amends to their parent(s), either by apologizing or taking them out to dinner; 12.4 percent had a curfew enforced; 11.1 percent were responsible for acquiring a library card or reading at least one book; 5 percent of the youth in the sample were required to pay restitution.

If necessary, panelists can provide youth and their families with other kinds of supports. Youth can be referred to the Office of Drug and Alcohol Abuse and the city's delinquency prevention services (which provide homework assistance and other after-school programming). Also, youth and their families can be referred for counseling to the Department

of Human Services. About 10 percent of youth and their families are referred for these support services each month.

Seventy-one percent of the youth in the sample completed their contract, which typically lasted two and a half months. When the youth completes the conditions of the contract, he or she receives an official completion notice from the District Attorney's Office. Some panels choose to have the youth return to the panel for a brief meeting, and all insist that the work or proof of work that was completed be turned in to the monitor. The panel then sends the paperwork, via the CPO, to the law clerk at the District Attorney's Office. There is no ceremony or congratulations. The youth, in the words of the ADA, are "just doing what they're supposed to do." In fact, both the District Attorney's Office and the panelists maintain that the youth were fortunate simply to enter the YAP program and that a clean record is a sufficient reward.

Monitoring, Not Mentoring

When the panelists have drawn up a contract and determined a discharge date, the youth and parents return to the room. The contract is read aloud, and the youth can accept or reject it. If the youth accepts, he or she is then assigned a monitor who was selected by the group when the youth was out of the room. The monitor is responsible for contacting the youth at least twice a month by phone or in person. Panelists say that the frequency of contact fluctuates with each case. The monitor is responsible for seeing that the youth fulfills the conditions of the contract and nothing more. Infrequently, the monitor develops a more personal relationship with the youth, but that practice is commonly understood to lead to "burnout." During training, the ADA instructs panelists that their job is to "monitor, not mentor," and most take this message to heart.

According to one panelist:

> *[A monitor] is someone who cares about this person but is not a close friend. I don't want them disappointed that I'm not going to stay in their lives. And I don't want to stay in their lives. I want to do what's best for them at that moment, and I think it's a mistake to get overly involved.*

Youth's Views on YAP

Almost every youth we spoke with indicated that the YAP charge represented their first arrest; most claim to have spent between 10 and 28 hours in jail. Therefore, it is not surprising that while these youth recognized the impact the YAP experience had on them, most attributed that impact to the arrest and interaction with the police rather than to the panelists or the contract. When asked if the YAP experience changed him, one youth responded:

> *Getting arrested changed me...I just said I ain't gonna do it no more 'cause I ain't tryin' to get arrested no more and put my mom and dad through that.*

One mother, comparing the impact of the arrest with the impact of the program, attributed her daughter's changed behavior to "mostly gettin' arrested, 'cause it scared the life out of her, it really scared her."

Further, while the panelists we interviewed spoke strongly about their reasons for involvement in the program, it was not clear to what extent the participating youth we spoke with were aware of the charitable motivation of most panelists. Few youth in the focus groups seemed to relate to the panelists as fellow community members or volunteers; some even thought the panelists were being paid.

Interestingly, some of the youth said that they wanted more recognition for the work they had done under their contract as well as with their monitors. One youth, clearly disappointed, reported:

> *When I went back, some guy came out...I told him who I was, I gave him all the slips I had, gave him everything, my report card, everything. He was like, "I'll take that," and he goes, "OK, bye." Like it was nothin'.*

Other youth we interviewed seemed to want more mentoring from the YAP monitor. Many agreed with a young man who said:

> *[I want a monitor who would] stop through and check on you, talk, sit around...somebody to talk over your problems, what you been going through and stuff like that 'stead of somebody that just speaks to you over the phone.*

In an effort to take a closer look at YAP and the program's effects on participants, we were interested in answering three questions:

Who gets into YAP?
Who completes YAP?
Who gets rearrested?

To answer these questions, we reviewed juvenile and court records for 300 youth who participated in YAP in 1994; and to provide some context and comparison for the behavior of this sample we also collected data on 300 youth who had been arrested for first-time, nonfelony offenses in 1994 but were not selected for YAP. This nonYAP comparison group contains individuals who were declared ineligible for YAP because they lacked family support, they were not enrolled in school, or their crime was considered too serious. The sample also includes youth who were considered eligible for YAP but who failed to appear at the hearing or the intake interview, claimed innocence, appeared without a parent at the hearing or intake interview, or were not offered a contract by their panel because their attitude was considered offensive.

It should be noted that the comparison of the two groups does not provide an accurate estimate of the impact of YAP since the comparison youth can safely be considered "harder" cases. Eighty-four percent were never considered for YAP; 9 percent were not offered a contract because of lack of parental support, failure to appear or a negative attitude; and 3 percent had been accepted into YAP but breached their contract. Only 4 percent went to court claiming innocence. The nonYAP group ended up being more heavily male (85.3% vs. 68.7%). Because females have lower recidivism rates, the YAP recidivism rate is likely to be lower than the nonYAP rate simply because of gender composition.

While it is important to bear in mind the limitations of the comparison group, the nonYAP youth group can still serve as a useful tool for evaluating the data for the YAP participants. The "creaming" process used to identify the youth most likely to benefit from the YAP experience creates a "better" group of young juvenile offenders, in comparison with the "worse" youth selected as the comparison group. It would make sense to assume that the recidivism rates and severity of subsequent crimes would be higher for the worse, or nonYAP, group than for the better YAP youth. Therefore, if the recidivism rate were worse for YAP youth or even equal to that of the nonYAP group, we would be inclined to conclude that YAP is not effective, perhaps is even harmful. However, if YAP youth had a lower recidivism rate, we could not necessarily conclude that YAP is effective. Any observed difference must be interpreted cautiously in light of these biases.

Who Gets Into YAP?

(See Table 1)

Among YAP youth, 68.7 percent of the sample are male, 68.8 percent are black, and 69.7 percent are between the ages of 14 and 17. For the first arrest, the largest percentage of charges (40.1%) were weapons violations; almost all were charged with possession of a weapon on school property (mainly pocketknives, box cutters and screwdrivers). The second most common crime among YAP youth was a crime against property (32.4%), which includes all theft and burglary charges; 14.4 percent were arrested for injury to persons, which includes various degrees of assault.

NonYAP sample youth are 85.3 percent male and 67.4 percent black; 86.3 percent are between the ages of 14 and 17. For the first arrest, the largest percentage of charges (31%) were drug law violations, which include both simple possession and intent to deliver (otherwise known as drug dealing). The second most common crime among nonYAP youth was weapons violation (26.5%), but these were much less likely to have occurred on school property; 20.9 percent were arrested for crimes against property.

Females are disproportionately represented among YAP sample youth; they constitute 31.3 percent of the total as compared with 14.7 percent of the nonYAP sample. YAP youth are also younger than nonYAP youth; 30.3 percent of YAP youth are ages 13 and under compared with only 13.8 percent of nonYAP youth. As Table 1 indicates, the two groups are very similar along racial lines.

Table 1:
Characteristics of YAP and NonYAP Youth

	YAP Youth (%)	NonYAP Youth (%)
Gender		
Male	68.7	85.3
Female	31.3	14.7
Race		
Black	68.8	67.4
White	18.5	17.4
Hispanic	12.1	14.1
Asian	0.7	0.3
Other	NA	0.7
Age		
10-11 years old	6.9	3.3
12-13 years old	23.4	10.5
14-15 years old	39.0	37.6
16-17 years old	30.7	48.7
Category of first crime		
Injury to persons	14.4	8.8
Crimes against property	32.4	20.9
Sex offenses	0.3	2.0
Weapons violation	40.1	26.5
Drug law violations	3.0	31.0
Malicious mischief	9.4	7.5

Table 2:
Contract Completion Rates for YAP Youth

	Completed (%)	Failed to Complete (%)
TOTAL	71.0	29.0
Gender		
Male	69.4	30.6
Female	73.0	27.0
Race*		
Black	70.1	29.9
White	85.5	14.5
Hispanic	57.1	42.9
Age		
10-13 years	76.1	23.9
14-17 years	68.0	32.0
Category of First Crime**		
Injury to persons	60.5	39.5
Crimes against property	68.8	31.2
Weapons violation	76.7	23.3
Drug law violations	66.7	33.3
Malicious mischief	74.1	25.9
Level of Violence of First Crime		
1: Violent***	61.3	38.7
2: Low-level violent or potential for violence	73.7	26.3
3: Nonviolent	71.2	28.8

* Only racial categories with an n > 2 were included in the table.
** Only crime categories with an n > 1 were included in the table.
*** A violent crime usually involved pushing a victim (usually a teacher or other authority figure), but did not involve a weapon or result in an injury.

Table 3:
Recidivism Rates by YAP Status

	Percentage of Youth Rearrested During 36 Months After First Arrest	
	YAP Youth Who Completed the Program	NonYAP Youth
All Youth*	29.9	44.4
Gender		
Females	10.8	11.1
Males*	36.6	50.2
Race		
Blacks*	30.1	44.4
Whites	29.8	35.8
Hispanics**	30.0	55.8
Age		
10- to 13-year-olds (at first arrest)	38.8	52.4
14- to 17-year-olds (at first arrest)	26.5	43.2

* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.101 level.

Who Completes YAP?

(See Table 2)

Seventy-one percent of all YAP youth who were offered and who accepted a contract completed it. That ratio remains relatively constant even when controlling for most characteristics of the sample. However, females were slightly more likely to complete the program than were males: 73 percent compared with 69.4 percent. Younger youth (ages 10 to 13) were somewhat more likely to complete the program than were older youth (ages 14 to 17): 76.1 percent compared with 68 percent. Nonviolent offenders were more likely to complete the program than were violent offenders: 71.2 percent compared with 61.3 percent.

Somewhat more striking differences in completion rates become apparent when the rates are controlled for race and category of initial crime. White youth had the highest completion rate, and youth who committed an injury to persons were less likely to complete YAP than were youth charged with malicious mischief: 60.5 percent compared with 74.1 percent.

Who Gets Rearrested?

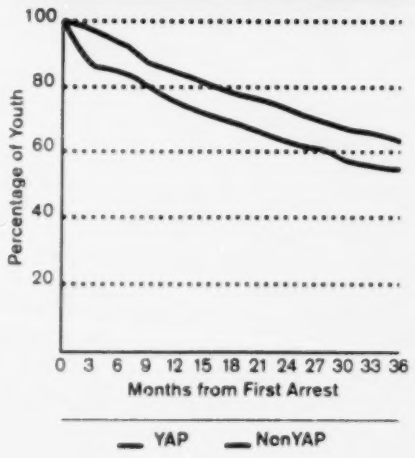
(See Table 3)

In the 36-month period after their first arrest, 29.9 percent of the youth who completed a YAP contract were rearrested at least once compared with 44.4 percent of nonYAP youth.[1] While this difference in recidivism rates seems encouraging, one must remember that the nonYAP youth are essentially a "more difficult" group of juvenile offenders. Indeed, even if the YAP program had no effect at all on enrolled youth, the very characteristics that cause youth to be rejected for YAP are likely to lead to higher recidivism rates for them. The mitigating factor is the inclusion in the YAP sample of a small group (10.4 percent of the total) of youth charged with felony offenses.

Bearing in mind this limitation, comparing the recidivism rates of the two groups is informative. Table 3 shows that we find statistically significant lower rates of recidivism among YAP males, YAP black youth, YAP Hispanic youth, and older YAP youth (versus nonYAP youth in these categories).

What is even more revealing is how recidivism is affected over time for the two groups. Figure 1 shows that YAP's effect seems to take hold within the first three months after arrest—approximately the time that YAP youth are under contract and being monitored. The 10-percentage-point gap in recidivism rates appears over those first three months and stays fairly constant thereafter. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the absence of a strict control group prevents us from conclusively measuring the impact of YAP, but the "three-month window" may indicate that the program has some effect.

Figure 1:
Percent of Youth Not Rearrested
(During 36 Months After First Arrest)



1. An earlier study of the YAP program conducted for the District Attorney's Office in 1996 found a recidivism rate of 22 percent for YAP youth.

Our observations of the Philadelphia YAP program and discussions with participants from all aspects of the program—including representatives from the District Attorney's Office, program staff, panelists, youth and parents—indicate that YAP is a promising approach for working with first-time youthful offenders and a model that other locales can learn from. Three aspects of the program are particularly noteworthy:

1. Its Community-Based Nature.
It is obvious that the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office has put a great deal of effort into developing and maintaining the community-based nature of the YAP program. As often as possible, youth are assigned to YAP hearings in their community police district, and, for the most part, adult panelists serve on panels in their home communities. This contact between youth and adults has the potential to help foster a sense of relationship and mutual responsibility between youth and adults and to mitigate the feelings of fear and distrust that often exist between youth and adult community members.

YAP program staff also appear to be very careful in their selection of panelists, choosing those who seem to have an affinity for and understanding of young people and who will not be put off by their sometimes "negative" behavior. They also select those who can devote the time necessary to participate fully in the YAP process. Our research on adult-youth relationships and experience with youth program operations indicate that the type of adult chosen to interact with youth in programs is critical in gaining youth's trust and strengthening intergenerational relationships.

All of the panelists we spoke with were enthusiastic about their experiences on the panels. Serving as panelists helped the volunteers feel more connected to young people and their own neighborhood and gave them an opportunity to "be a positive force for somebody." For adults who feel that "all children can be helped, they just need something positive in their lives," YAP is an opportunity to put that theory into action and reap the satisfaction of "walking the walk."

2. Its Balanced Approach: Support and Accountability.
The YAP approach provides youth with caring adults who are willing to intervene on their behalf in a way that allows them to avoid involvement with the justice system. As mentioned several times in this report, in the absence of this program these youth would most likely be placed on probation, receive very little supervision and end up with a delinquent record. At the same time, the YAP process provides youth with a strong and swift dose of community censure. According to Cleary as well as the youth we interviewed, most YAP participants have hearings (where they may have to face their victims) and are assigned contracts within 30 to 40 days of their offense. Adult panel members then monitor the completion of youth's contracts, which often require them to perform service in the community. Increasingly, programs for juvenile offenders are turning to this "balanced" approach for dealing with troubled youth.

On the other hand, again according to Cleary, youth who do not participate in YAP often do not have a court hearing for three to four months after their arrest. Once placed on probation, they receive little supervision and guidance because of probation officers' heavy caseloads.

3. The Involvement of the District Attorney's Office.
One of the strongest elements of the YAP program is the role of the District Attorney's Office. With the knowledge and strong support of the District Attorney, ADA Cleary is directly involved in every aspect of the program. This top-level commitment gives YAP the visibility and cooperation in the community and within the law enforcement system that is probably necessary for it to function as well as it does.

The involvement of the District Attorney's Office has also allowed the program to be flexible and to make changes and improvements when necessary. For example, with the oversight of the District Attorney's Office, the original eligibility requirements of the YAP program can be expanded to include higher-risk youth who can benefit from participation. Further, the incorporation of crime victims into the YAP process was done quickly and efficiently because of the direct supervision of the ADA.

Recommendations

There are a number of areas in which the program can be strengthened in order to make it even more effective.

1. Strengthen the Community Nature of the Program.
The community-based nature of the YAP program is a strong foundation to build on. Although one goal of the program is to let youth know that there are people in the community who care about them and who volunteer, some of the YAP youth we spoke with were not aware of the fact that their panelists were community members or volunteers. If YAP youth are to absorb the full impact of community concern, it is critical that they have and understand this information. It would also be interesting to observe the impact on youth's perception of panelists if each hearing incorporated an opportunity for panelists to describe their motivation for involvement and their connection to the community. It is possible that YAP operators assume that participating youth are aware that the panelists are community volunteers simply because that fact is so central to the program.

YAP officially assigns youth to a hearing in the police district they live in and appoints volunteers to the panel in their own neighborhood. However, because some police districts are especially busy, youth are occasionally sent to a hearing in a neighboring district. Likewise, panelists are sometimes assigned to panels outside their neighborhood if there is a shortage of volunteers. While young people are never sent across town for their hearings, shifting them out of their home district distracts from the community nature of the panel, one of the program's primary components. This problem is compounded by the fact that certain panels have a harder time recruiting volunteers than do others and are often staffed by residents of other districts. For example, one CPO pointed out, "While the 25th District is over 75 percent Hispanic, my panelists are from other districts, and only one is Hispanic."

The District Attorney's Office has already taken steps to deal with this issue by operating additional panels in some districts where there is a heavy caseload. It may be in the best interest of the program to ensure that it becomes standard practice to add panels in busy districts, thus allowing youth always to attend hearings in their own communities.

The ADA has said that the most common way of advertising for YAP panelists is "word of mouth." However, more aggressive and innovative advertising techniques (for example, in churches and barbershops) may be needed to recruit volunteers in neighborhoods where panels are currently staffed primarily by nonresidents. Additional recruitment efforts may also address the need for more men of color to serve as panelists. Approximately 80 percent of the YAP sample is made up of young people of color, and almost 70 percent is male. Both the District Attorney's Office and participating youth expressed a desire to see more African-American men on the panels.

2. Continue to Expand the Role of Victims.
Until recently, crime victims in the YAP process have existed primarily on paper. Although the District Attorney's Office sent a letter to all victims whose perpetrators accepted YAP, few victims collected restitution, and even fewer actually attended the hearings. No mention was made of victims by any of the youth participants we spoke with. Other programs similar to YAP have demonstrated excellent use of victims in both shaming and forgiving similar low-level offenders, and YAP may likewise benefit from increased victim involvement. Their participation may intensify the emotional impact of the hearing for youth and may allow the victims themselves to experience the feelings of reconnection to the community expressed by the panelists.

3. Improve the Panelist Training Program.
Overall, panelists seemed to feel that the training they received could be more relevant and more interactive. Most focus group participants nodded in agreement with the panelist who said, "I just think the initial training is a waste of time. I mean we're all adults; we've been in this world long enough to have some good common sense." A number of panelists complained about the experience of being "talked at." In contrast, panelists enjoyed the advanced training in the Good Shepherd Conflict Resolution Program because it involved role-playing and "we got a chance to have input."

Since panelists were more enthusiastic about the advanced training sessions, the District Attorney's Office may want to reexamine the initial training process and move away from a traditional classroom format to one that engages the volunteers more actively. Trainers may want to collect panelist feedback and make modifications with the assistance of veteran panelists.

4. Engage Youth More in the YAP Process.
The YAP youth frequently described the hearing and contract as something that happened to them, not a process in which they actively participated. Youth who did recall their YAP experience in a positive light were typically those who had become engaged in a community service assignment. The District Attorney's Office may want to consider modifying the hearing process so that it allows for more participation by youth. Perhaps youth could help contribute ideas for contract terms, which would help panelists further adapt the contract to the needs of the juvenile and would help the youth feel more like a true partner in, rather than a recipient of, the contract.

As it stands, some panels have youth return to the panel when they are done; others have youth turn in their work to the monitor or the CPO. Panelists whose districts require youth to come back upon completion recommend it: "For the most part, when they come back, they're usually fairly proud of the fact that they did it...There's a certain sense of accomplishment there. So I think if you don't bring them back, it's a mistake." Panels that currently do not meet with youth at the end of the contract may want to consider doing so. Youth may be eager to share, or at least be recognized for, the work they have done.

5. Clarify Role Responsibilities.
After almost a decade of operation, YAP has been adapted in different districts in an effort to meet the needs or match the personalities of different communities and individuals. The District Attorney's Office may want to evaluate the gradual modifications in roles and responsibilities that have taken place over time. For example, the CPOs in different districts vary considerably in their degree of involvement on the panel. The District Attorney's Office should decide if that variety is acceptable or if CPOs should be instructed to adhere to a single role description.

The role of the monitor also varies according to the personality of the panelist and the youth he or she has been assigned to monitor. One panelist would "like to see an expansion of the term monitor"; he wants to do more than simply say "the contract is this and that's all you do." Other panelists favored the less-involved model because, as one panelist warned, "You can't try and be all things to everybody because one, you burn yourself out; number two, you're really not doing the job you're supposed to." The District Attorney's Office may want to evaluate the range of monitor behavior they want to encourage and then make their opinion clear during panelist training sessions.

6. Take Steps to Increase the Appearance Rate for YAP Youth.
In the sample we studied, approximately 15 percent of the youth never showed up for their hearings and were subsequently re-listed to court. Appearance rates vary slightly by age and by race: 86.5 percent of the 10- to 14-year-olds appeared at their hearings compared with 80.4 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds; whites had the highest appearance rate at 89 percent compared with blacks at 84.7 percent and Hispanics at 80.6 percent.

Efforts should be made to increase these appearance rates and, where possible, discover the reasons some youth never show up. It is possible that the lower attendance rate for Hispanics is caused to some degree by language difficulties. If this is the case, the intake interviewer should have access to a translator, and reminder letters should be printed in Spanish as well as English. (The District Attorney's Office has printed a bilingual pamphlet describing the program and provides it to all YAP candidates at the intake interview.) It may be in the best interest of the program to contact nonattenders in an effort to discover their reason for not appearing.

If at all possible, Cleary's practice of visiting the homes of some youth to remind them to attend their hearing should be expanded. It will be worthwhile to document whether these pre-hearing visits positively influence youth attendance at hearings.

7. Broaden YAP's Referral Network.

In the sample, 50.2 percent of the youth who were awarded a contract were sent to the Philadelphia Service Institute (PSI). In 1995 Good Shepherd Mediation Program created its Conflict Resolution Program specifically to work with referrals from the YAPs and, since that time, has replaced PSI as the recipient of the bulk of YAP referrals. Such a high referral rate to a single organization may indicate a lack of information about other options. Many of the YAP panelists we spoke with indicated a need for more information on resources. Now over a decade old, YAP still relies on each panel's collective knowledge of its neighborhood's resources for referrals. The District Attorney's Office should evaluate the benefits of investing in a thorough survey of city resources and conveying the results to panels. It may be that individual panels are better suited for this task, in which case the District Attorney's Office could encourage and assist the panels with organizing and documenting the resources in their neighborhoods.

When developing a contract, panelists say they "try to find things that relate to what [the youth] did and what [the youth is] interested in." However, in the youth focus groups, we heard complaints from youth who were assigned to do community service at a police station, where they typically performed cleaning duties. The youth argued that they had not learned anything. One youth who had completed such an assignment claimed that it would have made more sense to him to work at a church: "Helping out people that need help. That would have been better." More resource information could decrease the number of police station assignments. YAP youth also expressed a desire for more mentoring from their monitors, and information on resources could be used to connect more youth to mentors and adults in the community.

8. Increase Public Awareness of the YAP Program.

Increased public awareness of YAP would help to address many of the issues raised in the above recommendations. First, publicity about the YAP program in general would likely lead to a wider pool of potential panelists. More residents who are informed about the program's existence, purpose and reliance on community members could mean more volunteers to staff panels. As a result, the District Attorney's Office would be able to establish second panels in busy districts and could potentially recruit more minority males. It is possible that a citywide publicity effort would reach a population that current recruitment tactics do not.

Second, with additional publicity, it is likely that eligible juvenile offenders would be aware of and understand the goals of the YAP program before they are arrested. The program would be strengthened if youth understood and appreciated the motivations of the community volunteer panelists. Advance information about YAP might also make the youth more appreciative of the opportunity that YAP extends to avoid the court system. Finally, it would be useful for city and nonprofit agencies (potential referral sources for YAP) to be aware of the program. Informed agencies might contact YAP and help to expand the referral network.

9. Sustain the Apparent Impact of the Program Manifested in the First Three Months.

The recidivism rate for YAP youth diverged from that of the nonYAP youth over the first three months. This delay of criminal activity occurs at the time that most youth are still in their contract period. It is possible that the presence of the monitors and the requirements of the assignments are what keep youth out of trouble. If this is the case, then it would make sense to develop ways to connect youth, perhaps through contract terms, to more permanent community resources so that this "hold" on recidivism might be maintained longer. For example, the program could serve to:

Connect youth to long-term mentors. The YAP youth we spoke with expressed, both directly and indirectly, a desire for more mentoring from their monitors. An example is the young man who said he would like a monitor who would "stop through and check on you, somebody to talk over your problems." P/PV's research has demonstrated the profound impact a mentor can have on the life of a young person. It would not be feasible for the YAP program, already operating above capacity, to take on the responsibility of arranging full-time mentoring. Particularly as the program continues to involve youth who are at even greater risk, the demands on monitors would be unmanageable. Perhaps contracts could be used to connect youth either to formal mentors (such as those available in mentoring programs or youth organizations) or to informal mentors in the community.

Connect youth to sustained programs and activities. If the YAP referral network were broadened and panelists had more programmatic options at hand, the odds would be better that a youth could be directed toward the program or programs that best match his or her interests or needs. In panelist training sessions, the District Attorney's Office could emphasize connecting youth to programs that have long-term possibilities. For example, instead of sending a youth to a one-time antitheft class, a panel could require a youth to volunteer at a soup kitchen that runs an established, consistent meal program. For those youth who are interested, relationships with agencies could continue after the contract is completed.

10. Conduct Further Research.

The above recommendations could be used by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to strengthen the YAP program. Once this has been accomplished, a formal random assignment study could be instituted to determine the actual effects of a strengthened YAP versus standard juvenile court proceedings. We also recommend that any further YAP research include a detailed analysis of program costs, so that the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office as well as law enforcement entities in other jurisdictions will have a clear picture of both the costs and the benefits of this type of approach.

Appendix: Study Methods

For this study, 300 of the youth who accepted the opportunity to participate in YAP in 1994 were randomly selected from the database maintained by the District Attorney's Office. This database includes the youth's name, address, date of birth, criminal charge, the district and date that his or her hearing was scheduled, the content of the contract, the scheduled termination date and actual discharge date, and if and when the youth completed the contract. If the youth did not accept the YAP offer, failed to appear for the hearing, was not offered or did not accept a contract, or failed to complete the contract, then that information is also noted.

A search was done in the Philadelphia juvenile records system using the names and birth dates of the YAP youth. If a match was made, the juvenile identification number, police photo number, charge, date and district of arrest, and court action taken were recorded for each juvenile arrest. A search was then done in the Philadelphia adult records system, again using names and birth dates as well as police photo numbers, when available. The charge, date, district of arrest and court action taken were recorded for each adult arrest. Only crimes, both adult and juvenile, that occurred inside the County of Philadelphia were recorded. Thus, the recidivism rates are slightly underestimated.

To put the recidivism behavior of YAP youth into some context, we collected data on a second group of somewhat similar youth—300 youth who had been arrested for first-time nonfelony offenses in 1994 but who were not selected for YAP. These youth were randomly selected from youth in the juvenile records system. Using the juvenile identification number, a search was made in both the Philadelphia juvenile records system for additional juvenile charges and in the Philadelphia adult records system. For both adult and juvenile crimes, the charge, arrest date, district and court action taken were recorded. Again, only crimes that occurred in Philadelphia were included.

The nonYAP comparison group contains individuals declared ineligible for YAP because they lacked family support, they were not enrolled in school, or their crime was considered too serious by ADA Cleary. The sample also includes youth who were considered eligible for YAP but who failed to appear at the hearing or the intake interview, claimed innocence, appeared without a parent at the hearing or intake interview, or were not offered a contract by their panel because their attitude was considered offensive. The comparison youth can safely be considered "harder" cases: 84 percent were never considered for YAP; 9 percent were not offered a contract because of lack of parental support, failure to appear or a negative attitude; and 3 percent had been accepted into YAP but had breached their contract. Only 4 percent went to court claiming innocence.

Counterbalancing this bias, the low-level felony and second-time offenders who are often admitted into YAP are not represented in the nonYAP group. Because these decisions are made at Cleary's discretion, there is no way to sort through the second-time offenders or the felony offenses of first-time offenders in the comparison group. Therefore, only first-time misdemeanor offenders are included in the sample.

A final difference between the YAP and nonYAP groups is the proportion of females. The comparison group selection was done randomly; the court did not match the groups by gender. The nonYAP group ended up being more heavily male than the YAP group (85.3% vs. 68.7%). Because females have lower recidivism rates, the YAP recidivism rate is likely to be lower than the nonYAP rate simply because of the gender composition. Thus, the comparison of the two groups does not provide an estimate of the *impact* of YAP. Information on the comparison group is given to provide the reader with some context.

To complement the quantitative data, we conducted five focus groups, four with youth and one with current panelists. Participants in the four youth focus groups were selected using the Percent Distribution of Delinquency Cases by Philadelphia Police Districts from the *Philadelphia Family Court 1993 Annual Report*, with which we identified the two highest crime districts (8% and 9% of the total) and three medium crime districts (each 4% of the total). We generated two lists for both the "high crime group" and the "medium crime group," one list of youth who had recently completed the program and one list of those who were currently completing their contracts. The youth were contacted by phone, and those who expressed interest received a letter and a consent form. Youth who completed the consent form were included in the focus group, and each youth received $10 and pizza. The focus groups were held in community centers and churches in the youth's community. The panelists were selected at random from the five districts chosen for the youth focus groups. The panelists were also contacted by phone and received a follow-up letter and $10.

In addition, we conducted interviews with the individuals who play a part in the YAP process or are affected by it: parents of youth who have gone through the program; probation officers and supervisors; CPOs who serve on and act as liaisons to the panels; Officer Ed Addison, the intake interviewer; Paul Johnson, the court liaison for the school district; Bob Napper, a trainer from Good Shepherd; Susan McNamara, a former employee of the Philadelphia Service Institute; Meg Cinberg, the ADA law clerk; and ADA Michael Cleary.

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. In carrying out this mission, P/PV works with philanthropies, the public and business sectors, and nonprofit organizations.

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